



# Nutria Harvest for Wetland Restoration Demonstration (LA-03a)

## Project Status

**Approved Date:** 1997

**Cost:** \$2.1 million

**Project Area:** N/A

**Status:** Implementation

**Net Benefit After 20 Years:** N/A

**Project Type:** Demonstration

## Location

This project is located throughout the coastal zone of Louisiana.

## Problems

The nutria is a nonindigenous, furbearing species in the rodent family that was introduced to enhance the Louisiana fur industry. Since the decline of the fur industry, nutria populations have increased tremendously along the coast. Because nutria voraciously consume marsh plants that help anchor wetlands, this non-native or exotic nutria population is now having a significant negative impact on coastal marsh health.

## Restoration Strategy

The goal of this demonstration project is to determine if nutria meat for human consumption and a meat processing system promotional program can be developed. This would facilitate their harvest through an increased meat demand. The program calls for Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act funding matching that of participating meat-processing plants in order to compensate trappers for the nutria they harvest. The project also includes monitoring selected coastal marsh areas by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) to assess both nutria damage and recovery resulting from this program.

Other components of the project include nutria meat recipe development and publication, along with an advertising and marketing strategy focused on increasing the public demand for nutria meat. The project is being implemented by the LDWF with oversight by the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



Louisiana's growing nutria population is detrimental to the state's coastal marshes as they consume wetland plants that hold the soil together.

## Progress to Date

This demonstration project was approved by the Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Task Force in April 1997. Through this project, LDWF has coordinated with consultants to develop and implement various nutria meat marketing activities. Marketing activities included LDWF staff activities and contracting with consultants to: 1) develop and evaluate local, national, and international nutria meat market potential for human consumption; 2) develop a nutria meat marketing plan; 3) participate in festivals and chef's competitions; 4) distribute nutria meat to the public through sales at grocery stores, restaurants, and other retail outlets; 5) determine nutria meat processing costs, product price structure, and potential meat production volume; and 6) plan promotional and advertising activities based on the Nutria Marketing Strategic Report.

The LDWF 1999, 2000, and 2001 nutria coastal damage surveys and reports indicated continued nutria-related marsh damages in the Louisiana deltaic plain at a level of approximately 100,000 acres per year impacted. Because of the January 2002 Task Force approval of the larger Coastwide Nutria Control Program (LA-03b), the LDWF will discontinue providing incentive payments to trappers and conducting nutria herbivory surveys under this demonstration project. Those two items will be funded under the larger project. However, funding for nutria meat processors enrolled in the program as well as nutria meat marketing activities will continue until project completion. This project is scheduled to be completed in October 2003. This project is on Priority Project List 6.

*For more project information, please contact:*



**Federal Sponsor:**  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Lafayette, LA  
(337) 291-3100



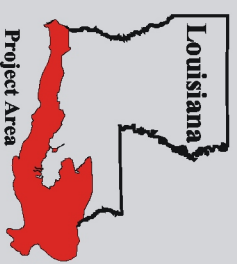
**Local Sponsor:**  
Louisiana Department of Natural Resources  
Baton Rouge, LA  
(225) 342-7308



# Nutria Harvest for Wetland Restoration Demonstration (LA-03a)



Project Boundary



Project Area



Map Produced By:  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
U.S. Geological Survey  
National Wetlands Research Center  
Coastal Restoration Field Station

Background Imagery:  
Thematic Mapper Satellite Imagery 2000

Map Date: October 1, 2002  
Map ID: USGS-NWRC/2003-11-041  
Data accurate as of: October 1, 2002

*Gulf of Mexico*

